

Menlo Park

Caltrain Bicycle Tunnel Study Process

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need a bike tunnel?

The train tracks bisecting Menlo Park create a barrier between the west and east sides of the city. The area between the Ravenswood and Alma crossing is the longest stretch without a crossing. Many residents have expressed an interest in having a crossing under the tracks to facilitate east-west connectivity. In particular, residents living west of the tracks would like improved pedestrian/bicycle access to City Hall, the Police Department, Burgess Park, Burgess Gym, Burgess Recreation Center, and the Menlo Park Library. Residents on the east side of the tracks would like better access to Safeway and other businesses on El Camino and in the downtown shopping district, and are concerned about safe access for children to and from Hillview and other schools.

The need for a crossing in this area was identified in plans beginning 15 years ago and the Transportation Commission, the Bicycle Commission and the City Council all consider it a priority.

Why was the location near Middle Ave chosen?

The Middle Ave. location was chosen based on a comprehensive community engagement process. During this process people weighed the pros and cons of several different locations and the majority supported this location based on criteria that included cost, public support shown in two community workshops, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to existing routes and the number of destinations within easy reach of the location.

How does the passage of the High Speed Rail project impact the tunnel?

Planning for future changes to the railroad will incorporate the tunnel location and design suggestions of the City of Menlo Park, thanks to a Council Subcommittee and staff work to ensure that future rail configurations support the tunnel at the Middle Ave location.

Area residents are concerned about things like parking and graffiti – how will those be addressed?

The City expects a minimum number of residents to park their cars at this location and ride their bikes from there to other destinations, however, should parking become a problem, no parking signs and other types of enforcement can be added. Graffiti in the tunnel can be minimized greatly by treating the tunnel surface with easy to clean materials, through periodic police patrols or through surveillance cameras should these prove necessary.

What happens next?

After the City Council tentatively approves a tunnel location, the City will begin discussions with Stanford University and any other property owners on the impacts to future development along the railroad corridor. Additional public meetings involving the Planning Commission and the City Council will be needed before the plan line can be formally adopted. Once that has happened, the City will begin identifying and securing funding for the project, possibly through State and Federal transportation and clean air grants.

The project completion date will depend on timeframes associated with adopting the plan line, developing funding for the project and additional grant requirements and coordination with any High Speed Rail grade separations that may occur.